

SYNERGY

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SAPAA KC honored its own during the NASPA Conference SAPAA Business Meeting for their service in enhancing the professional organization as well as the experiences of students on member campuses. Above, incoming SAPAA KC Chair Janet Brugger (middle left) and incoming Vice Chair Shannon Gary (middle right) thank former Chair Chris Lewis (far left) and former Vice-Chair Leigh Remy (far right) on behalf of the NASPA community.

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Updates from the Chair

Janet Brugger



Welcome to the latest issue of *Synergy*, the newsletter for the SAPAA Knowledge Community!

As your new KC Chair, I was touched by the many supportive notes and personal greetings that members have shared with me during and since our annual meeting in Philadelphia. I believe that this level of engagement has always marked our KC, and so it was no surprise to me that SAPAA ranks as the second-largest community of interest identified by NASPA members – with over 4,000 members.

Before taking a moment to highlight some of the ways in which I hope we will build on this legacy, I want to extend my thanks to those who have paved the way for us. Our Past Chair Chris Lewis, and Past Vice-Chair Leigh Remy, along with committee chairs and networking group leaders helped to grow SAPAA in exciting new directions.

The Promising Practices Award is a SAPAA tradition to honor the accomplishments of our NASPA institutions to transform the student experience. Our honorees this year, the Powercat Financial Counseling Program at Kansas State University, the Art of Advising Faculty Development Seminar at LaGuardia Community College, and the Serve 101 course at Philadelphia University, are all excellent examples of the power of academic affairs and student affairs collaborations.

I was pleased to congratulate awardees at our recent SAPAA business meeting. I was further enthused to hear our award recipients invite SAPAA members to reach out to them for future collaborations, as this presents us all with dynamic learning opportunities.

Having attended a whirlwind of events during the national conference, I must commend so many SAPAA members on the thought-provoking ideas presented in workshops and other sessions. I owe particular thanks to Dan Stypa, Laurie Hulcher and Shannon Gary for their coordination of several awards to recognize our members, and to Isaac Agbeshie-Noye, Dan Stypa and our colleagues in the Student Leadership Programs KC and the Sustainability KC for their hard work to coordinate an exciting and well-attended joint social at the Field House in Philadelphia.

As we move forward this year and beyond, I encourage SAPAA colleagues to keep the momentum going with their connections to me and the incoming leadership team listed on our SAPAA roster at: <http://www.naspa.org/kc/sapaa/roster.cfm>. I encourage you to keep us informed about your needs as emerging and senior professionals and faculty, to share your ideas, to involve yourselves, and to network with members. Shannon and I look forward to a strong showing of members submitting proposals for the 2012 annual conference in Phoenix (September 2 deadline), as well as volunteers for proposal review and other programs and activities throughout the year.

One of our most exciting opportunities in the future will be to develop a research grant, made possible by the generous support of Stylus Publishing LLC. The Research & Scholarship Committee will be working with leadership in the coming months to develop the call for proposal process. Ultimately the work accomplished under these anticipated grants will further our understanding of ways to bridge the domains of academic affairs and student affairs for increased institutional productivity and student outcomes.

I know that this new term has positioned NASPA for many changes, some that may even shape the organization's structure in the future. I encourage each of you to digest the proposed voting guide (located at: <http://www.naspa.org/consolidation/VotersGuide.pdf>) to make an informed choice in your ballot by April 15th.

In the coming year, Shannon and I look forward to moving SAPAA's legacy of engagement forward. We hope this will translate into greater inclusion of diversity in NASPA members and leadership, more collaborative programs with our KC colleagues, enhanced professional development opportunities for all – with specific attention to the development of scholars and practitioners of color within NASPA—and focused activities to promote student development and leadership across our campuses.

We look forward to all that we will accomplish together, and to your use of *Synergy* and other tools to transform our work and professional lives.

A Quick Glance at How School Cultures Shape Service Learning Programs



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Tulane University students participate in a variety of activities to develop surrounding communities organized by their Center for Public Service.

By: Jacqueline N. Jones

Introduction

What is service learning? What do service learning programs look like? These questions can be challenging even for skilled student affairs professionals. Service learning programs are often shaped by the circumstances and cultures from which they develop. Some programs are housed within student affairs, some within academic affairs, and some grow from collaborative efforts between the two.

School culture and student demographics play a key role in shaping the development and implementation of service learning programs. This article will take a quick glance at three different types of institutions with a focus on how institutional culture has impacted the development of their service learning program.

Northwestern University Qatar

Northwestern University Qatar is a recently established satellite campus located in Doha,

Qatar, also known as Education City.

The size of the student body is small at 105 students with a third of the students currently located in the United States conducting internship or residency requirements. In the upcoming years, NUQ would like to stabilize their student population around 160 students per year. The division of student affairs is currently in the process of developing student engagement programs in their international environment.

Debora Wood, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, describes the NUQ student body as diverse. "Students are coming here from across the Middle East, Jordan, Armenia, Egypt, and Africa."

The political atmosphere plays an important role in shaping the student experience but is difficult to pin down and describe. Students from different countries bring their own

political perspective and framework for valuing education. For example, native Qataris are encouraged to attend school by the royal family.

“Students are paid to go to college and get bonuses for good grades. Their focus is on education and not socialization,” added Wood.

Subsections of the student population may request individualized programming. Until administrators have a deeper understanding of the student body, all requests are taken into consideration to ensure equal and fair opportunities.

“A conservative group on campus may request an all-women service trip to accommodate cultural and religious traditions,” said Wood. “We have to consider these requests, determine if they fit our mission, and then see if we have the resources to support them.”

NUQ recently hosted an international service learning trip to Brazil. Wood spoke of how complicated the trip was to design and lead because not all participating students understood the concept of service.

“Students sometimes don’t understand the why. Why are we doing service? What is the benefit of spending time at a homeless



Students from Northwestern University Qatar show school spirit in numerous activities, including service trips to enhance their global understanding and to support development of communities in need.

shelter? Qatar is very private about social issues, so looking for good causes that students can understand is incredibly difficult in such a wealthy country,” Wood said.

Administrators at NUQ work to better understand their students and to search for service learning program models that fit a diverse, international student body.

Brookdale Community College

Brookdale Community College lies in the small town of Lincroft, New Jersey (about an hour south of New York City). A majority of the 16,000 students come from Monmouth County and surrounding counties. Twenty years ago, Brookdale decided to highlight the value of service learning through a new initiative on campus. Administrators wanted to model a service learning program that was open, accessible, and formally recognized students’ on their transcripts.

Crafting this type of program posed many challenges. As a two-year college, Brookdale had to consider how to develop a program that would enhance, not impair, academic achievement. Administrators also searched for creative ways to foster community and service on a commuter campus. In addition, most Brookdale students hold at least one job off campus.

“Almost all of our students work and take classes. It’s a challenge because students want to volunteer and engage with the community, but it’s a challenge to find the time,” said Linda Mass, Director of the Center for Experiential Learning and Career Services.

Brookdale implemented a multi-track program spanning student and academic affairs. The program requires students to complete a service and a curriculum component. Administrators developed three



Brookdale Community College students threw a winter-themed party for 24 special needs children at Children's Specialized Hospital in Toms River, NJ.

track options with enough flexibility to accommodate all types of students.

On the first track, students participate in student government through committees or subcommittees. On the second track, students complete a course with an optional service project. On the third track, students develop their own service and learning goals based on their area of interest. Students on the third track usually connect their project to a club or group on campus.

Students schedule one-on-one advising appointments before entering the program and selecting a placement.

"It's the most archaic way to do something, but it makes a difference for the student's experience. The control and quality are very important," noted Mass.

The Center has reached out to the community to develop as many partnerships as possible. Residential campuses often experience trouble transporting students to diverse service sites. Access to flexible transportation allows Brookdale students to engage with a diverse array of community partners. Mass spoke about the benefits of diverse placements.

"We have a lot of adult students coming

back for retraining. We can offer them placements with community agencies with all kinds of career focus," Mass said.

To help the placement process, the Center keeps a detailed database of community organizations and expectations for student volunteers. Preparation for both the student and the agency is important for placement success.

BCC has experienced many positive results from this new program. Admissions officers recognize that many incoming transfer students now express an interest in the program because it will be reported on their transcript. Overall, the service learning program will continue to grow as more students graduate and report the significance of their curriculum and service work.

Tulane University

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed the city of New Orleans. Tulane University decided to use this opportunity to rejuvenate the school and embrace an overarching model of public service. The implementation of a new post-Katrina model was challenging because change had to be implemented quickly, in a fast-moving environment. Involving faculty and community partners would be vital to success.

The Center for Public Service (CPS) was created as a result of Tulane's Renewal Plan with public service as the overarching mission of the center.

"We really wanted to make sure that students approach service from an educational framework. This is important so that we can contextualize what students are doing in the community through the courses they're currently taking," said Vincent Ilustre,

CPS Executive Director.

Graduation requirements were updated to require a sequence of two public service components. The first component is completed by students as freshmen or sophomores through a 100-300 level service learning course. During their junior or senior years, students can enroll in a 300-600 level course, complete a public service internship, conduct a community based research project with a faculty advisor, or participate in an international service learning program.

Tulane now offers over 250 service learning courses and emphasizes student control over course selection. The internet also gives students an opportunity to browse class syllabi to review service projects offered and the professor's expectations for their work.

On a program level, CPS compiles course evaluations from students at the end of each semester. The Center analyzes data to measure which community partnerships are most successful. A valuable lesson gained throughout this process is the importance of preparation and planning.

"A well-defined project designed by the community in partnership with the faculty ensures a successful program where all constituency groups mutually benefit from the service," Ilustre noted.

On a university level, Tulane implemented longitudinal assessment that will conclude in 2014. This study will collect data on incoming cohorts from 2006 to 2008. Students from each class will complete four surveys: before any service participation, after the first component, after the second component, and a final survey two years after graduation.

Initial findings were published in the *Michigan Journal for Community Service Learning*, and reflect greater engagement among Tulane University students in the New Orleans community than ever before.

"Students coming to Tulane are invested and interested in involving themselves in the community," Ilustre added. "Our office provides them with resources and information so they can positively engage."

Conclusion

Service learning programs take many shapes and forms, depending on the culture of the school and student body. Three major themes surfaced throughout the three case studies discussed here. Scale of influence plays a significant role in determining where the service learning programs are rooted on campus (student/academic affairs). Successful engagement programs also capitalize on various facets of school culture and student demographics. Finally, preparation and clear expectations are vital for a positive relationship when placing students with community partners.

Additional Resources

Brookdale Community College, The Center for Experiential Learning and Career Services website at www.brookdalecc.edu/career.

Northwestern University in Qatar, Service Learning website at <http://www.qatar.northwestern.edu/life-nu-q/student-activities/service-learning.html>

Tulane University, Center for Public Service website at <http://tulane.edu/cps/>.

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Big Questions and Sage Answers:

A Conversation with Dr. Helen S. Astin



Educator Helen S. Astin is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Higher Education & Organizational Change Program at UCLA.

Reflecting a research career that spans more than 50 years, the scholarship of Dr. Helen S. Astin has shaped our understanding about such diverse topics as the lives of women, the multi-faceted careers of faculty, the development of college students, and the characteristics of leaders who shape organizational change.

As a Distinguished Professor Emerita in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, and a Senior Scholar in the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), she continues as a prominent force in education, with her counsel sought by leaders in academe, industry and the community. Her distinguished service has included appointments as Associate Provost of the College of Letters and Science at UCLA, as Trustee at Mount St. Mary's College since 1985, and as member of the Board of the National Council for Research on Women, among many other advisory roles. Her scholarship has been recognized

with such accolades as a Distinguished Research Award from the American Educational Research Association and the Howard Bowen Distinguished Career Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education. She also shares with her spouse Alexander Astin, a scholarship program named in their honor, the Helen and Alexander Astin Civic Engagement Scholars Program, bestowed by UCLA Chancellor Gene Block and Vice Provost Judi Smith.

*Dr. Astin recently added another jewel to an already sparkling career with pioneering research supported by the Templeton Foundation on the spiritual development of students. She and co-authors, education luminary Alexander Astin and colleague Jennifer Lindholm, reported on longitudinal findings in their latest book, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Lives* (2010, Jossey-Bass). Fresh from an invited presentation at the NASPA annual conference, Helen Astin sat down with this interviewer to reflect on spirituality and its relation to students and civic engagement.*

MB: You and your co-authors indicated that exploring spirituality was important since ignoring this side of the self – particularly among students – creates a lack of authenticity or fragments the self. Your work with faculty also shows that they consider spirituality to be essential or very important in their lives. Do your findings for students suggest that spiritual development should be approached sequentially? Do we first need to focus students on developing

By: Marguerite Bonous-Hammarth

their internal authenticity before they can go outward and help others engage effectively in service learning?

Dr. Astin: First of all, we wrote this book because we felt that in higher education we have ignored these very important aspects of student development. We talk and we say in our mission statements that we care to develop the whole student and have a holistic education, but we don't really attend to students' holistic development. We pay much more attention to the exterior aspects of students – their education, their careers – and very little in term of their values, beliefs and authenticity. So, we felt it critical to attend to that.

Now, you ask if it is more important for us to get students to develop internally before we can get them effectively engaged in the community. I know that a lot of effort has been given to this in student civic engagement. In the book, we have identified five spiritual qualities and three of them deal with interconnectedness, such as Ethic of Caring, Charitable Involvement, and Ecumenical Worldview. One would presume if we can develop these qualities then students will become much more sensitive to what is happening in the world, and become more caring about issues in their communities.

At the same time, we find that if we do engage students in service learning or if we have students involved in the community, then their spiritual qualities will grow over time. As you might notice, we did a longitudinal study where we studied students as freshmen and followed up with the same sample of students as juniors because we really wanted to see what colleges do to develop the spiritual qualities that we consider very critical and very important for students. So, indeed,

engaging students in service learning plays an enormous role in developing their spirituality; so does helping others and doing charitable work. They play a role in developing Equanimity, their overall Ethic of Caring and Ecumenical Worldview.

MB: Speaking of equanimity as you define it – finding meaning in hardship or seeing each day as a gift – this concept seems particularly elusive to students when they face challenges during college. Since many of our NASPA colleagues work in student services, advising and teaching roles, we're very interested in understanding how we can help students to understand lessons from challenges, and to see the beauty in each day.

Dr. Astin: We felt that this quality was the prototypical quality of spirituality. It enables one to be more centered, more optimistic, and positive about life. You pose an important question. On one hand, we see students very stressed out. Not only do they have their school and classes, but in many cases they work. They also have a lot of stimuli from our wonderful technology. Students told us that the only times they had a peaceful moment was at night before they went to sleep, and by then they were exhausted.

What we have learned is that finding time, finding places where students can become contemplative, where they can meditate or reflect, that this is critical in developing equanimity, as well as the other qualities. Of course, if they have equanimity they are able to deal much more readily with all stresses. We found that all of these qualities, but equanimity specifically plays an enormous role in terms of predicting how students grow academically and in having healthy psychological dispositions. So there is no

question that reflection and contemplation help students to deal with challenges, whether they feel those challenges from school, family or other areas.

We surveyed colleges and universities to find out what are they doing in assisting students with their spiritual development and we learn from the campuses that they are creating such spaces for meditation. For example, Florida State University was building a park with designated spaces that could be used by students for reflection and meditation. UC Irvine also had plans along these lines. So we see this happening more and more around campuses, around the country.

MB: I think many of us find it hard to talk about spirituality without separating it out from a specific denomination or religious view, particularly for faculty and staff at public universities and colleges. How do we balance this understanding while valuing students' beliefs and yet imparting some skill-building strategies for students?

Dr. Astin: First, let me say we did study religiousness as well, and we had a number of questions that dealt with students' beliefs and practices, and we identified five qualities such as Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement, Religious Conservatism, Religious Skepticism and Religious Struggle. What we also found is that although there is a relationship between religiousness and spirituality, they are very different domains. Also where we see spirituality growing, we see religious conservatism and engagement declining during the college years.

The second part of your question had to do with how can faculty and personnel deal with these very important aspects of students' lives without thinking that we're

impinging upon the private experiences of students in their religious development? Also, how can we keep a separation of state and church? A lot of faculty told us that they struggled with this. However, we feel that dealing with students' pursuit of purpose and meaning in their lives is something that should not be difficult to deal with. This surfaces when students deal with the "big" questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my life about? Students also deal with questions on "why am I in college?"

These are very important aspects and questions in student lives, which we called "Spiritual Quest". This area is something that would be very important for all of academe to deal with and not to ignore. And we find that when faculty encourage students to discuss these matters, student spirituality grows. So, it's very important for faculty to recognize that they can play a very important role in enhancing students' development.

However, faculty feel uncomfortable, and they told us so. Also, faculty value expertise and feel that they are not experts on these matters, so they leave them alone. "Let the family or others in the community to deal with this."

First, we need to assure faculty that they do not need to be experts in discussing these matters with students; we also need to help faculty be more authentic themselves, because we found that faculty are also spiritual. We live this dual existence, so we need to help faculty and staff to touch bases with their own spirituality and feel comfortable about it.

MB: Can you say a couple of words about what you hope to accomplish with the new workbook?

Dr. Astin: We're just completing a guidebook and it should be out in April. We felt very strongly that our recent book, *Cultivating the Spirit*, needed to have a companion to it where we can help staff, faculty and student leaders in academic and student affairs to know how to create opportunities or to take up the existing opportunities in intentional ways to help students develop spiritually.

First we asked colleges to send us examples of policies and practices – through announcements and an ad in the *Chronicle*, and then we surveyed over a 1,000 campuses. At each campus we surveyed an academic affairs contact, usually the Provost, and a student affairs contact, usually the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and a chaplain. We heard from over 400 campuses and while we couldn't list everything, we have selectively categorized organizational practices so it will be helpful to the community. We will post news about the forthcoming guidebook on our website and hopefully have individuals also obtain it through publish-on-demand services.

MB: Were there any particular trends or themes in the practices you reviewed?

Dr. Astin: One set of practices is where programs focus on the “big questions”, either through seminars given at residence halls or in other settings. Another practice involves emersions – during summer or in January terms in experiences that promote spiritual development. I just learned recently that one of the learning communities at the Center of Consciousness and Transformation of New Century College at George Mason University has given our book to both faculty and students and they will use it as

part of their learning community work.

We also see practices that started some time ago around interfaith dialogues. Such dialogues have been very useful to students who talk about issues of concern to them. Bringing speakers to campus to help students engage in these conversations is another promising practice. There are many ways that we can take opportunities during orientation or during the freshman year experience or in learning communities where we can focus on these questions.

MB: You've really given much more empirical evidence now to quantify what many people would think is unquantifiable – spirituality and religious beliefs- and the College Student Beliefs and Values Survey was a great tool. Is this tool broadly available?

Dr. Astin: We do see this work as our gift to the community, and we've heard from many who have thanked us for helping to document through a large data base these areas of concern. It was a difficult task to try to measure, and we are very fortunate to have had a wonderful advisory board and technical panel to help us. In fact, one of our advisors, Peter Hill, with a colleague developed a compendium of over 150 scales to measure religiousness and spirituality. So, there are measures out there already.

We were very careful to develop the questions in such ways so that every student could find his or her voice. Instead of talking about “God” we talked about higher power, instead of saying the “Bible,” we talked about sacred texts. This questionnaire we have developed has been validated with three different samples, and the measures are very

robust. We very much want individuals to use the instrument, or use parts of our questionnaire and our scales, so we welcome the community at large to have access and to use it.

Let me also add that a few years ago, we made these data available through a competition. We wanted other people to use these very rich data and the Templeton foundation honored this wish of ours. We obtained 67 proposals and were able to fund only 12, and those proposed studies were completed primarily by junior faculty – young people early in their careers. Two of these researchers will co-edit a volume of this work. This is another demonstration of how these data could be used in different ways. Our hope is eventually to have the data archived through the Higher Education Research Institute, and have others, down the road, have access to the data.

MB: What do you feel should be the next major undertaking of student affairs personnel and academicians?

Dr. Astin: It's interesting because we've seen various movements through the years in the academy, and the one about service learning and civic engagement really has taken off. We did some of that work early on, and I really feel now that nobody questions it any more and we have seen the power of service learning and civic engagement, and we've seen how it helps students overall.

My hope is to see that the work we have done on spirituality would not be questioned and that it would have a place in the academy. I hope it becomes like the civic engagement and service learning movements. So, my hope is that we see it as critical to develop these qualities. That is what the future is all about – as parents, as partners, as workers, as people in the



*The authors, Drs. Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer Lindholm, publicize their book, **Cultivating the Spirit**.*

workplace as citizens in the community – these are qualities that are essential for the survival of our species.

Also, I think that this kind of work, as with service learning work, helps more of us to work collaboratively. As we've seen in service-learning, faculty cannot do it alone without the partnership of student affairs. And the same is true about the work on spirituality – I don't think faculty can do it without partnering with student affairs. So, my hope is that this work will bring much more unity and greater collaboration in the academy, and this also will be an example to our students as well.

The problems we are dealing with are very large problems and they require the talents of all of us to address. Collaboration is another aspect of interdisciplinary work – each one of us brings the strengths from our knowledge, from our disciplines, and from our work to the table – to deal with the big questions that we have to deal with in the academy.

Marguerite Bonous-Hammarth is Researcher in Residence at the University of California, Irvine, and Co-Chair of the SAPAA KC Research & Scholarship Committee.

C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S P R O M I S I N G P R A C T I C E S A W A R D R E C I P I E N T S !

The SAPAA KC recognized three programs with Promising Practices Awards during the 2011 Business Meeting in Philadelphia on March. 15.

“Although the nominee pool was particularly strong,” said Laurie Hulcher, Coordinator of the Promising Practices Award Selection Committee. “The programs recognized have raised the bar for innovative or sustained approaches to collaborations of student affairs and academic affairs in college and university settings.”

Powercat Financial Counseling Kansas State University

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C.T.F.A.***

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At a time when one in every 136 homes in the country has received a foreclosure notice, a new effort at Kansas State University aims to help its students move toward markedly different and positive outcomes with their finances.

The Powercat Financial Counseling (PFC) program opened its doors in 2009 and has since filled a major void for student financial education on topics that range from responsible credit card use to household budgeting and saving, and protection from identity theft. The program has been wildly successful, reporting nearly 83,000 student contacts, more than 150 one-on-one student counseling sessions, and approximately 2,500 group workshops and presentations.

“I think that the program’s success stems from the fact that this really was a student-driven venture,” said Program Director Jodi Kaus. “Our student government representatives and their members researched and approached administration with the idea to create and pay for a center that would help students gain essential knowledge about their financial affairs. Faculty and staff came together with students

to bring that idea into reality.”

The program has since expanded to provide Skype-to-Skype counseling for distance learning students, and to promote free, mini courses on money management on a new LoveYourMoney.org website. PFC also provides Kansas State University students in finance-related majors with important professional training as peer counselors.

The peer counselor training is intense, lasting approximately one semester and involving education about the counseling process, office policies and procedures, and observations made by Kaus as students put their knowledge into practice. Peer counselors and student clients alike benefit from content developed by faculty from the Department of Personal Financial Planning and services provided by the Office of Student Affairs.

“Our faculty, staff and students have been



Program Director Jodi Kaus accepts the Promising Practices Awards for Kansas State University.

involved with input from the beginning as part of our steering committee, and in our subsequent activities and this really informs me and imbues the program with a host of innovative best practices,” said Kaus.

The Art of Advising Faculty Development Seminar at LaGuardia Community College

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Student academic advising at LaGuardia Community College has become more holistically connected across the campus through the Art of Advising Faculty Development Seminar Series. The three, two-hour seminars weave together traditions from academic affairs (understanding the conceptual/theoretical, informational and relational dimensions of advising) with those from student affairs (enhancing multicultural awareness, using active listening skills, communicating empathy and exploring values and attitudes). The seminars were first offered in fall 2009.

“The program grew out of a major restructuring of our academic advising five years ago when the President of the college challenged the Developmental Advising Committee to examine how we were doing at each phase of a student’s learning experience,” said Laura McGowan, Director of Academic Support/Advising within the Center for Counseling, Advising, and Academic Support (CCAAS).

The seminars are facilitated by McGowan, Mitchell Levy, who serves as the CCAAS Executive Director, and Bernard Polnariiev, who directs the campus ASAP program to expedite Associate degree completion. Results show that the seminars’ 36 participants have contributed to a 100%

increase in faculty participation at College-Wide Advising Days within five semesters – resulting in a total of 98 faculty involved in the campus event for fall 2010.

Although the seminar’s compensation of a \$500 stipend and one-year membership in the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) is tied to faculty service for student advising, more than 95% of seminar participants expressed interest to continue with more intensive counseling commitments as part of a new Art of Advising – Level 2 course. These assessment findings suggest that faculty members gained relevant and critical information to enhance their interactions and mentoring with students and continue to endorse further instructional development. The Art of Advising – Level 2 participants also receive stipends (\$750) tied to their expanded advising roles, and made possible by the Dean for Academic Affairs Paul Arcario. Arcario has played an integral role in developing the series, supporting the Level 2 stipends as part of a Title V grant awarded to the Center for Teaching and Learning.



LaGuardia Community College representatives (from left to right) Bernard Polnariiev, Laura McGowan, and Mitchell Levy, received a Promising Practices Award to recognize the Art of Advising seminar.

“The initial Art of Advising seminars supported a cultural shift that was needed on the campus to connect developmental advising and assessment of those efforts intentionally to campus learning and other student outcomes,” said Polnariev.

In fact, recent student evaluations showed that 93% of the 336 students who attended Advising Days in fall 2010 “were motivated to take action” to achieve their academic plans, compared to 88% in 2009. Members of the campus’ leadership also recognize the impact of such faculty development, with a recent effort launched to work with former seminar attendees in a student e-portfolio initiative to enhance successful transfer to senior colleges.

With McGowan, Levy and Polnariev documenting more than 4,000 hours of student advisement provided by their faculty seminar attendees, they illustrate very tangible ways in which a campus investment continues to impact and improve student experiences. As the group has



Students from Philadelphia University, one of three Promising Practices Award recipients, get their service chops contributing to Habitat for Humanity during Alternative Spring Break.

acknowledged in past presentations at NASPA and NACADA, and most recently with colleague Valerie Jones at NASPA 2011 in Philadelphia, the course’s ongoing success stems from opportunities for deliberate reflection on student and faculty data to inform the whole organization.

“When we saw evaluation reports that the next steps after advisement for approximately 30% of students included visits to the Transfer Office, we knew that our actions had to include making that office more visible during Advising Days, creating sufficient feedback loops from other sources to ensure we learn and address other needs as well,” said Levy.

SERVE 101: Serving and Learning in Philadelphia at Philadelphia University
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Students from the SERVE 101 class at Philadelphia University find that career and community can connect to form new possibilities.

The course on Serving and Learning in Philadelphia boasts participation from 270 students and approximately 22 partner organizations to provide more than 4,000 service hours locally. With an enrollment that reflects 20% of the University’s population, the course also aids an increasingly large portion of students to accomplish a primary institutional aim “to graduate ethically responsible citizens.”

“We wanted to provide career oriented students who enroll at our school with a service option that also would create opportunities for reflection about their service experiences, tie those experiences to professional interests, and meet the

visible needs in our community,” said Associate Dean Aurélio Valente, whose office coordinates the course.

SERVE 101 was first offered in 2009 and has been credited with helping students to move beyond narrow perspective as volunteers to encompass civic engagement into their career aspirations. Majors from architecture to the health sciences and other areas gain unique understanding about their responsibilities to others in the community while envisioning how their intended professions and industries may become better stewards for the city.

“We hear wonderful stories about the transformations that occur for our students. For example, we have interior design majors who comment about beginning their service projects with the Make A Wish Foundation with very rigid ideas about how to reshape environments for their terminally ill clients and then revision – both for the projects at hand and for their future careers – possibilities to accommodate the needs of all community members,” said Valente.

Students enrolled in this hybrid course attend four class meetings, schedule two individual consultations with the instructor, complete a minimum of 10-15 hours of community service, and participate in online journaling as well as in a service-learning showcase. The course also meets a Physical Education requirement for the University.

The students also benefit from close collaborations among coordinators and instructors from the respective divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Life.

“All aspects of the course are developed as a team, and instructors and our community members work together to meet some pressing needs in ways that keep the topics engaging, relevant and representative of a true partnership,” said Valente.

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE READS

By: Greg Freed and Hillary Ornberg



Bringle, R. G., Hatcher, J. A., and Muthiah, R. N. (2010). The role of service-learning on the retention of first-year students to second year. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 16(2), 38-49.

Yeh, T. L. (2010). Service-learning and persistence of low-income, first-generation college students: An exploratory study. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 16(2), 50-65.

Persistence and retention are major concerns of student and academic affairs

practitioners as well as faculty members. Why then, you might ask, are we discussing these concerns in a newsletter devoted to civic engagement and service-learning? Recent research suggests service-learning may facilitate both.

Service-learning practitioners frequently employ qualitative assessment to determine whether they are impacting student learning, the quality of which presumably impacts persistence and retention. But such assessment may seem insubstantial to administrators faced with hard enrollment

data; it may even appear tangential to the short-term financial viability of tuition-driven institutions. Thus, we would like to direct your attention to two recent articles – one qualitative, the other quantitative – as you consider service-learning’s implementation and impact on your campus.

Theresa Ling Yeh’s (2010) *Service-Learning and Persistence of Low-Income, First-Generation College Students: An Exploratory Study* qualitatively explores how service-learning influences persistence among low-income, first generation students. Her research method largely relies on responses from and observations of student interviews she conducted to demonstrate the impact of service-learning on four areas of student development: 1) academic, 2) psychosocial, 3) personal and spiritual, and 4) sociocultural/ sociopolitical.

These areas of development correlate to four themes that emerged in her findings with regard to the outcomes of their service-learning participation. Respectively, these are: 1) building skills and understanding, 2) developing resilience, 3) finding personal meaning and 4) developing critical consciousness. Yeh suggests that service-learning experiences may help these students cultivate sociocultural capital that facilitates substantive community building and academic confidence. These, in turn, promote success in college and empower students to become passionate change agents.

Participants in Yeh’s study developed critical skill sets that stimulated greater investment in their own academic persistence. However, the study’s small sample size (N=6) presents a major limitation to the generalizability of this finding. This limitation speaks to the challenge student and academic affairs practitioners face when qualitatively assessing the efficacy

of service-learning programs, let alone their impact on persistence and retention. Qualitative assessment allows practitioners to gain rich insight into students’ service-learning experiences, but this can be difficult to conduct with larger samples. Moreover, service-learning outcomes (such as finding personal meaning or developing critical consciousness) can be difficult to quantify, despite the efficiency of quantitative methodology in tracking the progress of a large sample over time.

Notwithstanding these challenges, Bringle, Hatcher & Muthiah (2010) quantify trends in persistence and retention as they relate to service-learning in “The Role of Service-Learning on the Retention of First-Year Students to Second Year.” The authors pay homage to Tinto’s (as cited in Bringle, Hatcher & Muthiah, 2010) notion that “retention programs should include initiatives that change the everyday academic experience of students,” and they explore service-learning as one such initiative.

In the two-year study, Bringle et al. sought to determine whether the first-year experiences of students enrolled in service-learning courses reported different outcomes than those of their peers who were not enrolled in service-learning courses (the authors defined outcomes as “quality of the educational experience, intention to continue at that campus”). They also sought to determine what factors mediated intention to stay and actual re-enrollment.

Their multiple regression analyses were based on the pre- and post-test responses of 685 first-year students, most of whom identified as female (76.3%) and “Caucasian” (91.8%). These cases contrast those of Yeh’s study, wherein the author sought equal representation of both sexes and all respondents were members of racial

or ethnic minorities. Bringle et al. do not provide SES data, which could provide an interesting point of comparison between the two articles.

Bringle et al. found that service-learning course enrollment was correlated with re-enrollment the following year. They also found a significant difference in the pre-course intentions to graduate from a given campus between service-learning and non-service-learning students. Controlling for pre-course intentions, however, rendered the relationship between service-learning and re-enrollment statistically insignificant.

What is especially interesting is that “enrollment in a service-learning course was related to post-course intentions to stay at the campus” (44), and post-course intentions “were much better predictors of re-enrollment than were intentions at the beginning of the semester” (45). Intention, however, is not retention – and the authors note that a single course has limited ability to impact students’ overall attitudes and behaviors. The authors make no causal suggestions that service-learning leads to improved retention; they do point to the fact that students who enrolled in service-

learning courses identified the courses as better educational experiences.

While service-learning’s connection to persistence and retention warrants further study, ample evidence suggests that it positively impacts the student experience in a given course. For this reason alone, we believe these studies further legitimize its implementation as pedagogy in higher education. If an enriching student experience affects high retention – a supposition we believe, albeit intuitively, is the case – the institution that nurtures service-learning may ultimately improve its educational outcomes.

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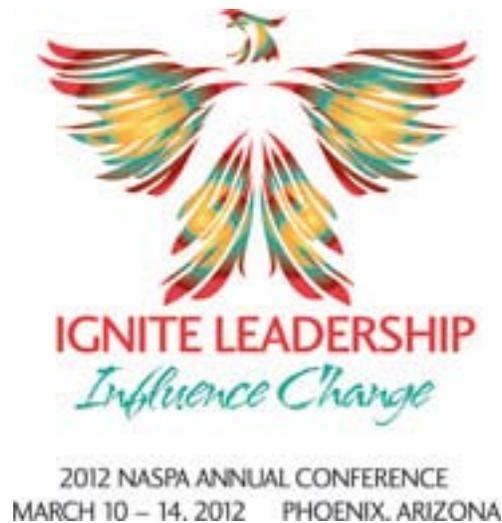
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Submit suggested story ideas to Communications Committee Co-Chairs Nancy Singer (nsinger@email.arizona.edu) and James Kohl (James_Kohl@uml.edu).

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